

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T CAIRO 14260

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR PINS PINT EG
SUBJ: ASSESSMENT OF EGYPTIAN DISCONTENT WITH SADAT'S PERFORMANCE/
POLICIES

REF: (A) STATE 201818, (B) 76 CAIRO 11784

1. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THERE IS GROWING DISCONTENT ON PART EGYPTIAN PUBLIC AND MILITARY WITH SADAT'S POLICIES AND PERFORMANCE. NEGATIVE TREND REPORTED LAST FALL (REF B) HAS CONTINUED AND HAS BEEN AGGRAVATED DURING PAST TEN MONTHS. WE ARE PREPARING DETAILED ANALYSIS WHICH WE HOPE SHORTLY TO SUBMIT.

2. AMONG OTHERS, CAUSES FOR SADAT'S WANING POPULARITY INCLUDE: (A) GROWING PUBLIC AND MILITARY MISGIVING THAT, DESPITE MUCH TALK, ME PEACE PROCESS IS EFFECTIVELY STALLED, THAT SADAT ERRED IN PLACING ALL OF HIS EGGS IN USG BASKET, AND THAT SITUATION BECOMING FROZEN; (B) GOE'S INABILITY DEAL WITH RAMPANT INFLATION AND PROSPECT OF FURTHER PRICE RISES; (C) "OPEN DOOR" POLICY HAS FAILED BENEFIT MASSES OF EGYPTIAN PEOPLE AND HAS ONLY CREATED CONSPICUOUS CONSUMERISM AND NEW GROUP OF "FAT CATS"; (D) SOME MILITARY UNHAPPINESS WITH SADAT'S LIBYAN POLICIES; (E) SIGNS OF RETROGRESSION IN SADAT'S AVOWED

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POLITICAL LIBERALISM; (F) CORRUPTION; (G) THE PRESIDENT'S ISOLATION AND CRONYISM.

3. THE PRESIDENT HAS OVEREXPOSED HIMSELF IN PUBLIC SPEECHES. HE HAS AROUSED GREAT EXPECTATIONS, BUT HAS HAD NO DEMONSTRABLE SUCCESS ON ANY FRONT. AS A RESULT, HIS POLICIES, FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC, ARE BEING INCREASINGLY

QUESTIONED NOT ONLY BY TRADITIONAL ANTI-SADAT ELEMENTS, BUT ALSO BY MODERATES AND MIDDLE CLASS WHO HAVE NORMALLY SUPPORTED HIM. MILITARY IS RESTIVE NOT ONLY BECUASE OF LIBYAN CAPER, BUT BECAUSE PROMISED ARMS DIVERSIFICATION PROGRAM MOVING VERY SLOWLY, GROWING REALIZATION NO U.S. ARMS LIKELY (C-130S HAVE LIMITED IMPACT) AND EGYPTIAN DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY BEING STEADILY DEGRADED WHILE ISRAEL'S MILITARY CAPABILITY INCREASING RAPIDLY. THIS MILITARY RESTIVENESS LIKELY TO INCREASE.

3. ABOVE SAID, DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS DISCONTENT HAS YET REACHED PROPORTIONS WHICH WOULD POSE SERIOUS POLITICAL THREAT TO SADAT NOW. IT COULD BECOME SO. A NEW ROUND OF PRICE RIOTS, WHICH ARE BEING WIDELY PREDICTED, WILL AGAIN POSE DELICATE QUESTION OF LOYALTY OF INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES AND THE MILITARY. IN FINAL ANALYSIS, IF THERE IS NO MEANINGFUL PROGRESS ON ME PEACE FRONT IN NEXT SIX MONTHS AND IF ECONOMIC SITUATION SHOWS NO SIGNS OF IMPROVING, SADAT WILL FACE SERIOUS POLITICAL PROBLEMS AT HOME. BUT WE SHOULD BE CLEAR THAT MOVEMENT ON PEACE FRONT IS AS IMPORTANT TO SADAT'S STAYING POWER, AT LEAST IN SHORT TERM, AS IS ECONOMIC DELVELOPMENT. AT PRESENT HIS NEGOTIATING ABILITY NOT CURTAILED, ALTHOUGH HE MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT VIEWS OF THE MILITARY. EILTS

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